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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

NEA FOR BURNS/SATTERFIELD
NEA/SA/EX FOR AUSTIN-FERGUSON; DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA;
DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA; DRL FOR A/S CRANER;
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DANIN;
USAID FOR DCHA, DCHA/FPP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [CASC](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND MARCH 27-29, 2004 --
(1500 HOURS LOCAL) -- TWO PALESTINIANS KILLED IN WEST BANK
VIOLENCE; UNRWA REJECTS AS UNSAFE IDF REQUIREMENT FOR STAFF
TO CROSS EREZ ON FOOT

THIS IS A JOINT MESSAGE FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV AND CONGEN
JERUSALEM.

SUMMARY

[11.](#) (SBU) Summary: A seven-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed March 27 in Balata refugee camp during an exchange of fire between the IDF and Palestinian gunmen. Both sides claimed that inadvertent fire by the other had killed the boy. A group of Israeli settlers occupied and vandalized a school in the Palestinian village of Sawwiya March 26 before being removed by Israeli security forces. Although crossing points into the Gaza Strip have been partially re-opened for merchants, some goods, and some international staff, international agencies have refused to allow their staff to cross through Erez on foot, as required by the IDF, citing unacceptable security risks to the staff members in the event of an attack (see Tel Aviv septel). A total of 31 Palestinians were arrested in the West Bank and Gaza March 27-29. End Summary.

West Bank

[12.](#) (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: A seven-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed March 27 in Balata refugee camp, near Nablus, during an exchange of fire between the IDF and Palestinian gunmen. Both sides claimed that inadvertent fire by the other had killed the boy.

-- Death: The IDF killed a Palestinian man March 28 in Bariya village during an attempt to arrest him. According to press reports, the man went up to the roof of his house, where the Israeli troops shot and killed him. The IDF reportedly said the man, Ahmad Tul, had brandished a stick which they thought was a gun.

-- Injury: Two Israelis were wounded March 26 when a bomb exploded near their car as they drove near Bayt Aryeh settlement.

-- Injury: Two Palestinians were wounded March 28 when Molotov cocktails were thrown near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem.

-- Injury: One Palestinian was injured March 28 in Nablus in the course of being arrested by the IDF. The army succeeded in arresting the man and one other Palestinian in this operation.

[13.](#) (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- The IDF arrested 25 Palestinians throughout the West Bank over the reporting period.

[14.](#) (SBU) DEMOLITIONS:

-- The IDF destroyed a house in Bidya village that belonged to a man who used an ax to attack three Israelis near Tel Aviv last week.

[15.](#) (SBU) SETTLEMENT EXPANSION/EVACUATION/VIOLENCE:

-- A group of Israeli settlers attacked a school in the Palestinian village of Sawwiya March 26. They occupied the school, vandalized it, and remained for several hours before being removed by Israeli security forces.

-- The IDF March 28 dismantled a container placed by settlers

along "Worshippers' Way," between Kiryat Arba and Hebron.

16. (SBU) SEPARATION BARRIER:

-- The IDF used tear gas to break up demonstrations against the separation barrier in Qatanna village March 28.

Gaza

17. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: Two Palestinians, including one UNRWA employee of the Rafah sanitation office, were injured March 27 by shrapnel during clashes that erupted during an IDF incursion into Rafah (see "Incursions").

-- Injury: The IDF reported that one soldier was injured March 28 in an exchange of fire with Palestinian gunmen west of Khan Yunis.

-- Injury: The IDF reported that one Palestinian was injured March 28 in Rafah when the IDF fired a tank shell at what it termed an uninhabited structure.

-- Mortars/Rockets/Hand Grenades: The IDF reported that one mortar was fired at Netzarim settlement March 27, one at Katif settlement March 27, two at Nissanit settlement March 27, and one at Neve Dekalim March 26 and a second March 28.

-- Shootings: A total of eight shooting attacks were reported March 26-29, according to the IDF: three near Khan Yunis, two each near Slaw settlement and Rafah, and one near Rafiah Yam.

-- Explosions: The IDF reported that an explosive device was detonated against IDF troops during a March 27 IDF incursion into Rafah.

18. (SBU) ARRESTS:

-- UNRWA reported that six Palestinians were arrested March 28 at the Abu Khouli-Gush Katif checkpoint.

19. (SBU) INCURSIONS/DEMOLITIONS:

-- UNRWA reported that two IDF tanks, two bulldozers and one excavator entered the al-Barahma area of Rafah March 27 and leveled an area of previously demolished houses. The IDF placed and detonated six explosive charges, reportedly to destroy tunnels according to UNRWA. Two Palestinians, including one UNRWA employee who was sitting outside his house, were injured in the clashes that broke out as Palestinian militants fired small arms and anti-tank missiles at the IDF forces, who returned fire.

110. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS/CHECKPOINTS:

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open for Palestinians.

-- Erez Crossing was closed to Palestinian laborers March 27-29, but 59 merchants over 28 years old were able to enter Israel March 28. On March 29, 158 merchants over 28 years old entered Israel. Diplomats in vehicles and internationals on foot were allowed to cross on March 27-29, and ministerial-level Palestinians were authorized to cross with prior coordination with COGAT March 28-29. International agencies refused, effective March 27, to allow international staff to cross through Erez on foot, citing unacceptable security risks to the staff members in the event of an attack (see Tel Aviv septel).

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was open March 28 and 29, with 3,581 workers entering the Zone on March 28 and 1,782 entering on March 29.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers March 27-29, but re-opened for the import into Gaza of aggregates used in construction March 28 and 29.

-- Karni Terminal was partially open for the import and export of goods into the Gaza Strip March 27-29. Unpacked goods may enter, but no Palestinian containers may enter or exit. UNRWA reported March 29 that this arrangement was only barely adequate to the need for commercial goods and foodstuff to enter the Gaza Strip. Sources confirm that containers of UNRWA-consigned goods are allowed into Gaza, but that the empty containers are not consistently being allowed back out. UNRWA is currently declining to receive such containers, claiming that the re-export problems will result in UNRWA being charged large demurrage fees for the stalled containers (see Tel Aviv septel).

-- Rafah Terminal was open for Palestinian travelers.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was open March 27-29 for people to cross out of the Gaza Strip. Toufah checkpoint was open for women, children under 12-years-old, and males over 35 years-old on March 27. Toufah was closed March 28-29, according to UNRWA.

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KURTZER